

CLAIMS

1. (Previously amended) A method of dispensing, tracking and managing pharmaceutical products utilizing prescribers, pharmacies, and a central computing station, comprising the steps of:
- a) forming a series of product cards by encoding on respective product cards information that identifies a particular pharmaceutical product;
 - b) issuing the product cards to participating prescribers;
 - c) activating the product cards after issuance to prescribers by the prescribers communicatively linking the product cards to the central computing station and wherein activation is established by the central computing station verifying the authenticity of the product cards, recording selected information encoded on the product cards in a database associated with the central computing station, and finally approving activation;
 - d) transferring a respective activated product card from a prescriber to a patient;
 - e) the patient in turn presenting the activated product card to a participating pharmacy;
 - f) validating the activated product card at the pharmacy by the pharmacy communicatively linking the presented product card with the central computing station and verifying that the presented product card has in fact been activated;
 - g) after validating the presented product card, the pharmacy then dispensing the approved pharmaceutical product to the patient; and
 - h) accounting to the participating pharmacies for pharmaceutical product dispensed.

2. (Previously amended) The method of claim 1 wherein the product cards when delivered to a prescriber are in an unactivated state and wherein the activation of the product cards takes place while the product cards are in the possession of a prescriber.

3. (Original) The method of claim 2 further including the step of issuing an authorization card to the participating prescribers and wherein activation of the product card is conditioned upon respective prescribers establishing authorization.

4. (Original) The method of claim 3 including the step of establishing prescriber authorization by communicatively linking a prescriber's authorization card with the central computing station and verifying the authenticity of the prescriber's authorization card.

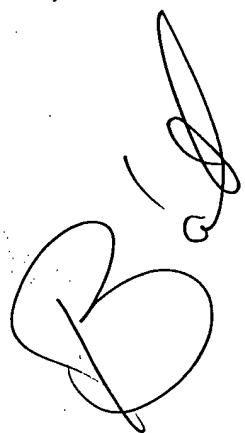
5. (Original) A method of dispensing, tracking and managing pharmaceutical products utilizing prescribers, pharmacies, and a system including a central computing station and database, comprising the steps of:

- a) forming a product media and encoding that media with information that identifies a particular pharmaceutical product;
- b) issuing the product media to one or more prescribers;
- c) activating the product media by a prescriber communicatively linking the product media to the central computing station wherein the central computing station records encoded information from the product media into a database associated with the central computing station and thereby activates the product media;
- d) the step of activating the product media including entering data associated with the product media into a terminal and thereafter uploading data associated with the product media from the terminal to the central computing station;
- e) transferring the activated product media from a prescriber to a patient;
- f) the patient then presenting the activated product media to a pharmacy;

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- g) validating the product media at the pharmacy by communicatively linking the presented product media with the central computing station which determines if the presented product media has in fact been activated by a prescriber and if activated, the central computing station approves dispensing of the pharmaceutical product identified and authorized by that product media;
 - h) the step of validating the product media including entering data from the activated product media into a terminal and uploading that data from the terminal to the central computing station;
 - i) after validating the presented product media, dispensing the approved pharmaceutical product to the patient; and
 - j) periodically accounting to the participating pharmacies for pharmaceutical product dispensed in accordance with the records of the database associated with the central computing station.

6. (Original) The method of claim 5 wherein activation of the product media is conditioned upon the activating prescriber being an authorized prescriber, and wherein validation and dispensing of the pharmaceutical product is conditioned upon the validating and dispensing pharmacy being an authorized pharmacy.

7. (Previously amended) The method of claim 6 wherein authorization for both prescribers and pharmacies is established in part at least by issuing a uniquely identifying authorizing media to each participating prescriber and pharmacy and wherein the step of authorization entails prescribers and pharmacies establishing a communication link between the issued authorizing media and the central computing station wherein the central computing station effectively scans the issued authorizing media so as to authenticate the authorizing media.



8. (Original) The method of claim 7 wherein participating prescribers and pharmacies are provided with a communication terminal for communicating with the central computing station, and wherein prescriber and pharmacy authorization is further conditioned upon the initialization of the communication terminal associated with respective prescribers and pharmacies.

9. (Original) A system for tracking and managing the dispensing of pharmaceutical products utilizing medical prescribers and pharmacies, comprising:

- a) a central computing station having an associated database;
- b) a first array of communication terminals located remotely from the central computing station at various medical prescriber sites with each communication terminal communicatively linked to the central computing station;
- c) a second array of communication terminals located remotely from the central computing station at various pharmacy sites with each communication terminal communicatively linked to the central computing station;
- d) a pharmaceutical product media encoded with information identifying a particular pharmaceutical product;
- e) the pharmaceutical product media assuming the form of individual media slips with each individual media slip including the encoding information particularly identifying the pharmaceutical product; and
- f) wherein the prescriber terminals and the pharmacy terminals are capable of receiving and reading the encoded information associated with the individual pharmaceutical product media slips and communicating that information to the central computing station where the central computing station tracks and manages the movement of the individual

pharmaceutical media slips between prescribers, patients and pharmacies and also controls the actual dispensing of the pharmaceutical product identified by the individual pharmaceutical product media slips.

10. (Original) The system for tracking and managing the distribution of pharmaceutical products of claim 9 further including a series of system authorization media slips with each authorization media slip including specific information particularly identifying an authorized medical prescriber or pharmacy and wherein the authorization media slips are transferred to the appropriate participating medical prescribers and pharmacies; and wherein the prescriber and pharmacy terminals are capable of reading the authorization media slips and communicating the encoded information thereon to the central computing station for authorization verification such that after authorization has been established, authorized prescribers or pharmacies are then permitted access to the system for purposes of prescribing or dispensing pharmaceutical products.

11. (Currently amended) A method of prescribing and dispensing prescription pharmaceutical products comprising:

- a. forming a pharmaceutical product media and encoding that media with information that identifies one or more particular prescription pharmaceutical products;
- b. issuing the pharmaceutical product media to one or more prescribers;
- c. electronically activating the pharmaceutical product media and transferring the activated pharmaceutical product media from a prescriber to a patient, wherein the activated pharmaceutical product media identifies one or more prescription pharmaceutical products that have been prescribed by the prescriber for the patient; and
- d. presenting the activated pharmaceutical product media to a pharmacy that fills the prescription identified by the pharmaceutical product media.

12. (Currently amended) The method of claim 11, wherein electronically activating the pharmaceutical product media entails a prescriber communicatively linking the pharmaceutical product media to a central computing station where the central computing station records encoded information from the pharmaceutical product media into a database associated with the central computing station.

13. (Currently amended) The method of claim 11, wherein the pharmacy electronically validates the pharmaceutical product media prior to fulfilling the prescription identified thereby.

14. (Currently amended) The method of claim 1213, wherein the validation of the pharmaceutical product media by the pharmacy includes communicatively linking the presented pharmaceutical product media with a central computing station which determines if the presented pharmaceutical product media has in fact been appropriately issued by a prescriber.

15. (Cancelled).

16. (Original) The method of claim 11, wherein the pharmaceutical product media includes a plurality of data fields, including at least one data field for identifying at least one prescribed pharmaceutical product, and associated data fields for identifying the quantity and number of refills for the associated prescribed pharmaceutical product.

17. (Previously added) The method of claim 11 wherein issuing the pharmaceutical product media and activating the pharmaceutical product media are separate steps.

18. (Previously added) The method of claim 11 wherein the steps of issuing the product media, activating the product media, transferring the activated product media and presenting the product media are performed in the order set forth herein.

19. (Previously added) The method of claim 11 wherein presenting the pharmaceutical product media to the pharmacy and the dispensing of the identified pharmaceutical product is conditioned upon the prior activation of the pharmaceutical product media.

20. (Previously added) The method of claim 19 wherein activating the pharmaceutical product media is conditioned upon the prior issuance of the pharmaceutical product media.

21. (Previously added) The method of claim 11 including issuing the pharmaceutical product media in an inactive state and wherein in activating the product media the media is converted from the inactive state to an active state.

22. (Previously added) The method of claim 21 wherein in the inactive state the pharmacy cannot deliver the identified pharmaceutical product to a person presenting the pharmaceutical product media; and wherein in the active state the pharmacy may deliver the pharmaceutical product identified by the media presented.

23. (Previously added) The method of claim 11 including storing selected information on the pharmaceutical product media in a database.

24. (Currently amended) The method of claim 2311 including recording in the database that a particular pharmaceutical product media has been activated.

25. (Previously added) The method of claim 24 further including recording information in the database that indicates that the product media has been presented to a pharmacy and that the pharmacy has delivered the pharmaceutical product identified on the media presented.

26. (Currently amended) The method of claim 11 including recording information relative to the product media in a database; and providing communication links between a series of prescribers and the database, and between a series of pharmacies in and the database.

27. (Previously added) The method of claim 26 wherein in activating the product media, the prescriber communicates information to the database that identifies the product media that the prescriber desires to activate.

28. (Previously added) The method of claim 26 wherein when the product media is presented to the pharmacy, the pharmacy communicates information to the database that identifies the product media and by communicating with the database the pharmacy determines if the product media has been activated and if activated the pharmacy communicates information relative to the product media that indicates that the particular pharmaceutical product identified by the product media has been delivered to a person.

29. (New) The method of claim 12 wherein prior to activating, the pharmaceutical product media assumes an inactive state, and wherein upon actuation the database identifies that the state of the pharmaceutical product media has changed from an inactive state to an active state.

30. (New) The method of claim 29 wherein after activating the pharmaceutical product media, a pharmacy validates the pharmaceutical product media by accessing the database and determining whether the pharmaceutical product media has assumed an active state.

31. (New) The method of claim 30 wherein the validation of the pharmaceutical product media by the pharmacy includes communicatively linking the presented pharmaceutical product media with a central computing station that includes the database.

32. (New) A method of prescribing and dispensing prescription pharmaceutical products comprising:

- a. forming a pharmaceutical product media and encoding that media with information that identifies one or more particular prescription pharmaceutical products;
- b. issuing the pharmaceutical product media to one or more prescribers;
- c. activating the pharmaceutical product media and transferring the activated pharmaceutical product media from a prescriber to a patient, wherein the activated pharmaceutical product media identifies one or more prescription

- pharmaceutical products that have been prescribed by the prescriber for the patient;
- d. presenting the activated pharmaceutical product media to a pharmacy that fills the prescription identified by the pharmaceutical product media;
 - e. the prescribers activating the pharmaceutical product media prior to the pharmaceutical product media being issued to a patient, and wherein the activation by the prescribers includes communicatively linking the pharmaceutical product media to a central computing station wherein the central computing station records encoded information from the pharmaceutical product media into a database associated with the central computing station; and
 - f. the pharmacy validating the pharmaceutical product media prior to filing the prescription identified thereby, and wherein validation by the pharmacy includes communicatively linking the presented pharmaceutical product media with the central computing station to determine if the pharmaceutical product media has been activated by a prescriber.
33. (New) The method of claim 32 wherein the steps of issuing the product media, activating the product media, transferring the activated product media and presenting the product media are performed in the order set forth herein.
34. (New) The method of claim 33 wherein activating the pharmaceutical product media is conditioned upon the prior issuance of the pharmaceutical product media.
35. (New) The method of claim 32 including issuing the pharmaceutical product media in an inactive state and wherein in activating the product media the media is converted from the inactive state to an active state.
36. (New) The method of claim 35 wherein in the inactive state the pharmacy cannot deliver the identified pharmaceutical product to a person presenting the pharmaceutical product

media; and wherein in the active state the pharmacy may deliver the pharmaceutical product identified by the media presented.

37. (New) The method of claim 32 including storing selected information on the pharmaceutical product media in a database.

38. (New) The method of claim 32 including recording in the database that a particular pharmaceutical product media has been activated.

39. (New) The method of claim 38 further including recording information in the database that indicates that the product media has been presented to a pharmacy and that the pharmacy has delivered the pharmaceutical product identified on the media presented.

40. (New) The method of claim 32 including recording information relative to the product media in a database; and providing communication links between a series of prescribers and the database, and between a series of pharmacies and the database.

41. (New) The method of claim 40 wherein in activating the product media, the prescriber communicates information to the database that identifies the product media that the prescriber desires to activate.

42. (New) The method of claim 40 wherein when the product media is presented to the pharmacy, the pharmacy communicates information to the database that identifies the product media and by communicating with the database the pharmacy determines if the product media has been activated and if activated the pharmacy communicates information relative to the product media that indicates that the particular pharmaceutical product identified by the product media has been delivered to a person.
